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SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

ENHANCING, REACTIVATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION CENTRES

Note by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. In paragraph 9 of resolution 47/73 B of 14 December 1992, the General Assembly noted the substantial contribution by the Government of Poland and requested "the Secretary-General to finalize, in consultation with the Polish authorities, arrangements for a United Nations information component in Warsaw".

2. In paragraph 10 of the same resolution, the General Assembly called upon "the Secretary-General to implement fully its recommendations contained in resolution 46/73 B, including paragraphs 1 (l) and (m), regarding the establishment of a United Nations information centre in Sana'a, Yemen, as well as the reactivation of the United Nations information centre in Tehran and the enhancing of the information centres in Dar es Salaam, Dhaka and Bujumbura".

3. In paragraph 11 of the same resolution, the General Assembly encouraged "enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point of promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials".

4. The present note provides an update of the Department's efforts to implement the various recommendations within its limited existing resources. In this connection, it will be recalled that the General Assembly decided that the additional resources required must be met from within existing resources of the Department of Public Information.

United Nations information component in Warsaw

5. The Polish Government has to date offered to provide rent-free office premises and sufficient financial resources to cover the salaries and staff costs for three local-level posts (an amount of 200 million zlotys earmarked for this purpose at this time is equivalent to US$ 12,650). However, as a result of the visits to Warsaw by the officials of the Department, discussions with Polish authorities and with the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) who would head the information component, it became clear that certain requirements had not been met.

6. The UNDP Resident Representative indicated that while he would indeed be undertaking information activities on behalf of the United Nations, he was not inclined to launch an information component with a wider scope if the essential prerequisites were not in place.

7. Recent contacts with Warsaw indicated that the future premises for the information component situated in the building which also houses UNDP, had not yet been vacated by the current tenants, nor were there any preparations made to renovate the building for an information component.

8. An assessment of the resources required for a United Nations information component in Warsaw would depend on resolution of outstanding issues which are the subject of ongoing consultations with the Polish authorities. A more definitive determination of these requirements will be made upon conclusion of such discussions, after which the Department of Public Information would review their funding in close consultation with the Office of the Controller.

Enhancing the United Nations information centres in Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam and Dhaka

9. The information centres in Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam and Dhaka continue to perform their public information mandates in an effective manner with UNDP resident representatives serving as full-time centre Directors, under the overall direction of the Department of Public Information.

10. Modest measures have been taken to enhance these information centres within the Department's existing budgetary resources. As part of this effort, the Information Assistant from the centre in Bujumbura participated in a briefing programme at Headquarters. The Department also undertook to provide computer equipment for this centre. A staff member of the information centre in Dar es Salaam participated in local training courses on administrative matters. The Department also provided this centre with a new motor vehicle. An Information Assistant as well as a Reference Assistant were appointed for the centre in Dhaka. In addition, the Department enhanced its computer equipment and provided training for three staff members. The centre was also provided with a new motor vehicle.

11. While the Department recognizes that full-time internationally recruited Professionals in the field of public information would further enhance the work of these centres, this has not proven feasible due to a reduction in the number of such posts in the Department over the last two years.

Reactivation of the United Nations Information Centre in Tehran

12. The Department is proceeding with the full reactivation of the centre in Tehran within existing budgetary and staffing resources, in consultation with the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

13. The Department identified an existing post in the Professional category for the Tehran centre. Action to appoint a full-time Director is in progress, as well as to recruit locally a Reference Assistant and to provide computer equipment. It will be recalled that an Information Assistant was appointed at the end of 1991 and that the centre is operational with the UNDP Resident Representative serving as Acting Director, under the overall direction of the Department of Public Information.

14. Following the visit to Tehran by the Director of the Information Centres Division in the Department in September 1992, the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran have indicated that the extent of host government support for the full reactivation of the centre, would be finalized when the Director assumes his/her duties.

Establishment of a new centre in Yemen

15. An existing Professional level post in the Department has been identified for the information centre in Sana'a and action to appoint a full-time Department of Public Information official to head the centre is in progress. Further action to make the centre fully operational is now being undertaken.

16. In the meantime, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, who has been involved in preparations to establish the centre, has initiated specific information activities in the country.

Cooperation with the University for Peace in Costa Rica

17. The University for Peace at San José, Costa Rica, has continued to receive on a regular basis the relevant categories of United Nations documentation. In addition, the Office of Conference Services has added other services to its regular entitlement, to include, inter alia, the indexes of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library (UNDOC, Index to proceedings of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council), Treaty Series, sales publications in various categories, manuals and brochures, UNBIS and other databases. Moreover, the Department of Public Information has continued to work with the University for Peace as its focal point in promoting United Nations activities and disseminating the United Nations information materials in Costa Rica. The University regularly receives the UN Chronicle and other information material in Spanish produced by the Department.

18. The Department has also been using the Radio for Peace International, a short-wave radio station broadcasting from the campus of the University for Peace, as an outlet for a variety of United Nations radio programmes. At present, this station is broadcasting every week some 7 hours and 45 minutes of United Nations programmes in English and two and a half hours of programming in

Spanish. In addition, it also carries on a regular basis radio programmes produced by other members of the United Nations system, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Labour Organisation.